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ABSTRACT

Although the study of thought processes is sometimes considered to be the province of psychologists, the realm of internal dialogue can legitimately be studied as intrapersonal communication. Second thoughts, also termed self-talk or dissonance, can be discovered and examined in speech drafts, monologic letters, and diaries. For example, the patterns of revision and occasional return to earlier phrasing are partially revealed in five handwritten versions of the Gettysburg Address, as Abraham Lincoln continued to rethink his words three to four months after delivering his speech. Another example of second thoughts are John Cheever's letters, recovered and published by his son, that reveal a dissonance which contrasts with the decisive voice in his completed fiction. Cheever's letters show, among other recurring patterns, his attempts to define his personal identity and refine the images he later used in his stories. Also representative of inner speech is the diary of 18-year old Colin Perry who recorded his thoughts about the Battle of Britain, but who also revealed his preoccupations, ambivalence, and self-doubt. These resources illustrate an aspect of intrapersonal communication in which the mind comes back again and again to an earlier thought, sometimes contradicting or reconsidering, but often reaching a higher level of insight and refinement. (Eighteen references are attached.) (KEH)

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Second Thoughts as Intrapersonal Communication

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Second Thoughts as Intrapersonal Communication

Abstract

The study of thought processes is sometimes considered to be the province of psychologists. But second thoughts are a form of internal dialogue which is clearly within the purview of communication scholars. This paper offers examples of second thoughts which are preserved in the drafts of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the monologic letters of John Cheever, and the war-time diary of Colin Perry. These writings are records of self-talk, and exemplify an abundance of similar material which is available for study.

Second Thoughts as Intrapersonal Communication

A constructive controversy has developed regarding the distinction, if any, between mental processes and intrapersonal communication. In a debate sponsored by the Intrapersonal Communication Commission at the 1988 convention of the Speech Communication Association, Blaine Goss and Gerald R. Miller argued that "thinking" and records of thought (e.g., journals, diaries and other reflective writings) are properly the study of psychologists and should not be appropriated by communication theorists. The other side of this friendly debate was upheld by Charles Roberts and Judy Pearson, who argued that disciplinary boundaries cannot and should not be absolute.

Even if the first position is accepted--that "thought" should not be viewed as intrapersonal communication--there still remains a rich area of "mind work" which <u>can</u> be defined as internal communication (see Braiker, 1989). This is the realm of re-thinking, which may be called self-talk, dissonance, or inner speech--all synonyms for the internal dialogue that can legitimately be studied as intrapersonal communication. Even theorists who are most concerned about academic trespassing, while insisting that thoughts belong to psychologists, might concede that second thoughts are open to communication scholars. This paper suggests that second thoughts can be discovered and examined in speech drafts, letters, and diaries.

Speech Drafts: Abraham Lincoln's Second Thoughts

When several drafts of a speech are available for study, the patterns of revision and occasional return to earlier phrasing can reveal the inner debate occurring in the mind of the creator. Abraham Lincoln, for example, continued to rethink his words three to four months after delivering the Gettysburg Address. The nature of Lincoln's second thoughts are partially revealed in five handwritten versions of his address--all slightly different (see Mearns and Dunlop, 1963).

The Nicolay copy is believed to be the manuscript from which Lincoln spoke on November 19, 1863; this manuscript was preserved among the papers of his private secretary, John G. Nicolay. The Hay copy, presumably written after Lincoln's return to Washington, was apparently a gift to John Hay. The Everett copy was written early in 1864 in response to a suggestion from Edward Everett (the main speaker at Gettysburg) that copies of their addresses be sold for charity. The Bancroft version was written in late February 1864, in response to a request from historian George Bancroft for a copy to be included in a volume of facsimiles being prepared by his stepson, Alexander Bliss. The Bliss copy was written in early March after Bliss informed Lincoln's secretary that different margins, a heading, and a signature were needed to meet publication requirements.

Two stenographic copies were taken down as the speech was delivered, and these versions also differ from Lincoln's reading

manuscript. One of these stenographic copies was published the following day in The New York Times and would have been available to Lincoln as he reflected on the speech and wrote the later versions (see The New York Times, 20 November 1863, p. 1).

A comparison of the Nicolay copy and the newspaper version indicates that Lincoln made several spontaneous departures from his reading manuscript. These variations were usually incorporated by Lincoln into subsequent versions of the text. Several passages illustrate his second thoughts. (1) The Nicolay copy reads: "who died here," but Lincoln said and retained: "who here gave their lives." (2) The Nicolay copy reads: "This we may," but the words Lincoln spoke and kept in later versions were: "It is altogether fitting." (3) The Nicolay copy did not contain the phrases "to the unfinished work that they have" and "It is rather for us to be here dedicated," but Lincoln inserted these words while speaking and retained variations of the first phrase and the exact words of the second phrase in all subsequent versions. Perhaps most interesting are the words "under God," which were not in the Nicolay text nor in the Hay copy written within days after the ceremony; but the stenographic copies show that Lincoln said the words and in the three versions written months later, Lincoln decided to insert them into the text. In addition to the preceding examples, numerous other wording and punctuation differences exist in the manuscripts and further confirm that Lincoln continued to rethink his creation.

One can easily imagine Lincoln in his study in the winter of 1863-64 (The New York Times version of his address on his desk),

pausing over the familiar phrases, still pondering alternatives. That private internal debate underlies this most public of speeches.

Monologic Letters: John Cheever's Second Thoughts

In a 1914 letter to Conrad Aiken, T. S. Eliot wrote: "Letters should be indiscretions--otherwise they are simply official bulletins" (Valentine, 1988, p. 2C). John Cheever's letters, recovered and published by his son, are indiscretions in the sense that they reveal a dissonance which contrasts to the decisive voice in his completed fiction. Cheever's letters show, among other recurring patterns, his attempts to define his personal identity and refine the images he later used in his stories.

Ben Cheever (1988) writes of his father's "inner struggle" to reconcile his bisexuality (pp. 327-330). On the one hand, John Cheever wrote of homosexuality as "unsavory" in The Wapshot Chronicle and pressured his young son to repress any mannerisms that didn't meet the cultural expectations of masculine behavior. Yet he later invited his son to read his journals in which Cheever's complicated sexuality was clearly revealed. Ben Cheever (1988) writes: "My father was a man of massive and fundamental contradictions. He was an adulterer who wrote eloquently in praise of monogamy. He was a bisexual who detested any sign of sexual ambiguity. Growing up, I didn't know what the word "homophobic" meant, but I knew what the word "faggot" meant, and I heard it used" (p. 18). John Cheever told his son many times that he hoped

Ben would not have his "difficult propensities," but then would not explain what he meant. In the 1970s and 1980s, Cheever's "inner struggle" was reflected in love letters to both men and women--letters which not infrequently discussed his wife and family. The following excerpt from a 1977 letter to a young man is representative and shows Cheever engaged far more in an intrapersonal dialogue than an interpersonal correspondence.

> To scrutinize and examine my feeling for you is idle but there is nothing much else I can do. . . . All of my speculations may be no more than the thinking of a lecherous old man who hankers after the skin of someone younger but I will throw this out. Any dizzy analyst would declare that you are the ghost of my dead brother come back from the grave to solace the ghost of my long-gone youth. He would also declare that I am the spectre of your father, gotten richer and more literary. (B. Cheever, 1988, p. 331)

In another letter several months later, Cheever seems to have been totally preoccupied with self-definitions when he wrote:

> I will call you tonight or tomorrow and ask you to return for the weekend and when you refuse, as I think you will, I will understand. This seems to be very much a part of my love for you. It all seems quite simple. Neither of us is homosexual and yet neither of us are foolish enough to worry about the matter. . . . What I want is that which is courageous,

> intelligent and truthful for us both. One cannot work out a system of true and false in the space of one's life but I can find nothing false in my love for you. (B. Cheever, 1988, p. 341)

Cheever's need to emphasize his family life even as he envisaged an alternative is illustrated in the following letter from early 1978.

> Mary has been sick since her return and I have been doing the shopping and the cooking. My abilities in these fields might, when we live together, concern you. Last night I served uncooked baked potatoes, partially thawed frozen peas and burned lamb chops. . . . I love you too much to serve you spaghetti at five in the morning. (B. Cheever, 1988, p. 341)

The "inner struggle" that is recorded in Cheever's letters was ultimately not a dissonance about his sexuality, but a struggle to find language encompassing enough to express his complexity--a stretching toward an enlarged self-definition.

Cheever also used letters to try out images that he was mulling for possible use in his fiction. The following is the final paragraph of a letter to his wife in 1942.

> I had charge of signing the pay roll; one formation at which all the men appear. They filed into the Day Room tonight, one by one, and wrote down their plain and fancy names on the roll while the band in the quadrangle was playing "I'm Dreaming Of A White Christmas" and the regimental guard mount was having

> their guns inspected. This event--the rigid military demeanor of everyone involved--and the sentimental music always strike me as being funny and moving. Now I see that I've mixed up the payroll and regimental guard mount, which have nothing to do with one another. And I am very tired, sweet, so I'll stop. (B. Cheever, 1988, p. 87)

His son Ben writes of the above letter:

> It would be an exhaustive . . . exercise to draw attention to every place where the image from a letter echoes in the fiction. What's interesting about the last paragraph of the letter above is the fact that it comes back again and again, with the writing getting more and more beautiful and complex. Perhaps there's no connection beyond the fact that Christmas carols contrast brilliantly with regimentation and even squalor, but when I read this letter, I thought immediately of that dreadful afternoon in Falconer. These are prisoners, not soldiers. They've been herded into the prison's education building to fill out forms and have their pictures taken beside a plastic Christmas tree. . . . As they head away from the artificial Christmas tree, they begin to sing "Silent Night." (B. Cheever, 1988, p. 87)

Numerous other instances similar to the above can be found by comparing Cheever's letters to his fiction. For example, in a 1950 letter, he describes a cook at the family's summer camp as a "crazy

Pole" who goes out to "feed the chipmunks, porcupines, birds, and fishes," shouting "eat, eat, eat" (B. Cheever, 1988, p. 146); in his short story "Goodbye, My Brother," he describes a "Polish woman" who was a summer cook and "fed the songbirds in the orchard and the chipmunks in the yard," calling "eat, eat, eat" (J. Cheever, 1978, p. 11).

Possibly Cheever himself best summarized his constant rethinking and refinement of images when he said:

> I know almost no pleasure greater than having a piece of fiction draw together disparate incidents so that they relate to one another and confirm that feeling that life itself is a creative process, that one thing is put purposefully upon another, that what is lost in one encounter is replenished in the next, and that we possess some power to make sense of what takes place. (Time, 27 March 1964, p. 72)

Cheever used letters as a means of trying out descriptions and searching for sense in his experiences. On some days, he described the same events in several letters, each description somewhat different. Cheever inadvertently indicated the monologic nature of his letters in a 1968 message to Tanya, a Russian friend. He noted that his recent letters to her may have gone astray, but added that it really didn't matter (see B. Cheever, 1988, p. 260). Possibly those lost letters had served their actual purpose as a means for Cheever to test his thoughts and refine his second thoughts.

A Diary of Maturation: Colin Perry's Second Thoughts

In the year of the Battle of Britain, 18-year old Colin Perry recorded his thoughts about the war--but also revealed his preoccupations, ambivalence, and self-doubt. He looked for heroic cadences to describe the war and his anticipated place in it--but could not conceal his insecurities.

While recording his efforts to join the Royal Air Force at the earliest opportunity, he also recorded his fear of meeting girls--describing repeated eye contact in the tube and preplanned encounters in restaurants, where he never mustered the courage to speak. While he is almost self-righteous in denouncing lust, his attentiveness to the manners and appearances of young women is a recurring theme in the diary. He wrote in July 1940:

> The girl in the ABC was superseded this morning by 'the girl on the tube.' This girl I have seen on and off during the past year: she resembles Bette Davis, whom I like. She wore a large straw hat, bound with light blue ribbon, a royal-blueish dress, and a grey-blue coat: the colour combination looked quite attractive. Whether or not I shall ever speak to her I cannot guess, but I wonder if she thinks of me? Lately, it would appear, I am growing aware of the female sex, although I think it is a half-truth to say so for these observations are made in an off-handish way. I just think I would like to know a girl for--well, should I say by way of diversion, to broaden my scope of social life, which is

exceedingly poor. Heaven alone knows I have no intention of kissing and that caboodle. (Perry, 1980, p. 17)

Further indications of the workings and "reworkings" of Perry's mind are revealed in his misquotations of Winston Churchill's words that he heard on the wireless, mulled, and later recorded in his diary. On one occasion, Churchill had said: "While we toil through the dark valley we can see the sunlight on the uplands beyond." Perry recorded those words as: "We toil in the valley until we reach the dawn of a new day in the hills" (p. 20).

At times, Perry acknowledged wrenching changes of perception, as when he recorded the death of a father and child in a bomb shelter. Instead of his usual idealized descriptions, Perry wrote: "This is not glamorous or exciting; it's war, forged by a cold-blooded butcher" (p. 64). From 17 June to 5 November, Perry's diary reveals a gradually maturing awareness of the human consequences of war and gives increasing attention to the lives of Londoners rather than heroic fantasies. His early identification with T. E. Lawrence seems to ease toward more modest reflections on his role in the struggle. After seeing refugees from London's East End, Perry wrote: "I knew then that my diary is not 'exciting' reading of happenings to be envied, . . . but it shows simply the callousness, the futility of war. It depicts bloody people, smashed bodies, tragedy, the breaking up of homes and families" (p. 119).

Several critics have commented on the thoughts and second thoughts of Colin Perry. Robert Govender of the World Times wrote: "Here is Colin Perry in mystically poetic flight on Empire . . . Naïve and absurd though this document is . . . , it is nevertheless a very accurate guide to the thought-pattern of most Englishmen of this class at this period in their history" (Perry, 1980, p. 223). Paul Jennings of The Sunday Times found in this diary "the agonized, do-it-yourself attempts of youth to find order and purpose in the world, so paradoxically heightened by the lunatic disorder of war" (Perry, 1980, p. 224). Perry's diary has also been called "a minor classic of the psychology of adolescence" (Perry, 1980, p. 8), but it is primarily a record of his internal debate about the definitions of manhood in a time of crisis.

Other Records of Second Thoughts

The preceding examples are representative of resources that can be explored in pursuit of "second thoughts." Many similar materials are available for study.

The archives of the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston contain drafts of Kennedy's Inaugural Address with penciled changes on the manuscripts. The National Archives in Washington possesses a draft of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Declaration of War Address, in which he crossed out the words "a date that will live in world history" and replaced it with the memorable phrase "a date that will live in infamy."

The letters of Harry S. Truman disclose some of the private

ponderings that preceded and followed his adamant public statements (see M. Truman, 1981). Virginia Woolf's letters are partial maps of her struggles to keep her mind balanced (see Nicolson and Trautmann, 1975-80); appropriately, the first volume of her letters was originally entitled The Flight of the Mind. Eleanor Roosevelt wrote letters every day and they are said to "provide a diary of the movement of her psyche" (Isaacson, 1987, p. 65). Sylvia Plath has been described as creating a persona in her letters "that was radically different from the way she saw herself" as revealed in her journals (Valentine, 1989, p. 4C). The monologic nature of the letter form may be ultimately illustrated in Letters I Never Wrote, Conversations I Never Had in which Charles Ben Bissell (1987) wrote letters to deceased friends as a means of resolving his own anger, loss, and pain.

Henri J. M. Nouwen's (1976) diary discloses dissonance within its own pages; although intended as an affirmation of his experiences at a Trappist monastery, Nouwen's diary is interspersed with numerous second thoughts that indicate he was not yet at peace with the limitations of monastic life. Similarly, May Sarton's journals (1973, 1988) are essentially affirmations of solitude; yet her need for relationships surfaces in many passages. Nouwen and Sarton have recorded well the human tendency to rethink.

Conclusion

The helical model of communication is most often used to describe interpersonal communication (see Dance, 1967, p. 296).

However, this spiral model also illustrates an aspect of intra-personal communication in which the mind comes back and back to an earlier thought, sometimes contradicting on reconsidering, but often reaching a higher level of insight or refinement (see Jensen, 1985, p. 11). First thoughts may indeed be the province of psychologists. But the human mind is seldom satisfied with first thoughts, and the persistence of second thoughts invites attention from communication scholars.

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